



Phase II and Phase III Archeological Database and Inventory

Site Number: 18CH79

Site Name: Chapel Point

Prehistoric ☒

Other name(s)

Historic ☒

Unknown ☐

Brief Description:

Early and Late Archaic short-term camp, Early-Late Woodland shell midden, 17th-19th century cemetery

Site Location and Environmental Data:

Latitude 38.4673 Longitude -77.0382

Elevation 8 m Site slope 0

Site setting

-Site Setting restricted

-Lat/Long accurate to within 1 sq. mile, user may need to make slight adjustments in mapping to account for sites near state/county lines or streams

Maryland Archeological Research Unit No. 11

SCS soil & sediment code

Physiographic province Western Shore Coastal

Terrestrial site ☒

Underwater site ☐

Ethnobotany profile available ☐ Maritime site ☐

Nearest Surface Water

Name (if any) Port Tobacco River

Saltwater

Ocean ☐

Estuary/tidal river ☒

Tidewater/marsh ☐

Minimum distance to water is 0 m

Freshwater

Stream/river ☐

Swamp ☐

Lake or pond ☐

Spring ☐

Temporal & Ethnic Contextual Data:

Paleoindian site ☐

Woodland site ☐

Archaic site ☐

MD Adena ☐

Early archaic ☒

Early woodland ☒

Middle archaic ☐

Mid. woodland ☒

Late archaic ☒

Late woodland ☒

Contact period site ☐

ca. 1820 - 1860 ☒

ca. 1630 - 1675 ☒

ca. 1860 - 1900 ☐

ca. 1675 - 1720 ☒

ca. 1900 - 1930 ☐

ca. 1720 - 1780 ☒

Post 1930 ☐

ca. 1780 - 1820 ☒

Unknown historic context ☐

Unknown prehistoric context ☐

Unknown context ☐

Ethnic Associations (historic only)

Native American ☐

Asian American ☐

African American ☐

Unknown ☐

Anglo-American ☒

Other ☐

Hispanic ☐

Y=Confirmed, P=Possible

Site Function Contextual Data:

Historic

Urban/Rural? Rural ☒

Domestic

Homestead ☐

Farmstead ☐

Mansion ☐

Plantation ☐

Row/townhome ☐

Cellar ☐

Privy ☐

Industrial

Mining-related ☐

Quarry-related ☐

Mill ☐

Black/metalsmith ☐

Furnace/forge ☐

Other ☐

Transportation

Canal-related ☐

Road/railroad ☐

Wharf/landing ☐

Maritime-related ☐

Bridge ☐

Ford ☐

Educational

Commercial

Trading post ☐

Store ☐

Tavern/inn ☐

Military

Battlefield ☐

Fortification ☐

Encampment ☐

Townsite

Church/mtg house ☐

Ch support bldg ☐

Burial area

Cemetery ☒

Sepulchre ☒

Isolated burial ☐

Bldg or foundation

Possible Structure ☐

Post-in-ground ☐

Frame-built ☐

Masonry ☐

Other structure ☐

Slave related

Non-domestic agri ☐

Recreational ☒

Midden/dump ☐

Artifact scatter ☐

Spring or well ☐

Unknown ☐

Other context ☐

Interpretive Sampling Data:

Prehistoric context samples

Soil samples taken N

Flotation samples taken N

Other samples taken

Historic context samples

Soil samples taken U

Flotation samples taken U

Other samples taken



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Diagnostic Artifact Data:

Projectile Point Types	
Clovis	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hardaway-Dalton	<input type="checkbox"/>
Palmer	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kirk (notch)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kirk (stem)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Le Croy	2
Morrow Mntn	<input type="checkbox"/>
Guilford	<input type="checkbox"/>
Brewerton	<input type="checkbox"/>
Otter Creek	<input type="checkbox"/>
Koens-Crispin	<input type="checkbox"/>
Perkiomen	<input type="checkbox"/>
Susquehanna	1
Vernon	<input type="checkbox"/>
Piscataway	<input type="checkbox"/>
Calvert	<input type="checkbox"/>
Selby Bay	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jacks Rf (notch)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jacks Rf (pent)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Madison/Potomac	<input type="checkbox"/>
Levanna	<input type="checkbox"/>

Prehistoric Sherd Types

Marcey Creek	<input type="checkbox"/>	Popes Creek	34	Shepard	<input type="checkbox"/>	Keyser	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dames Qtr	<input type="checkbox"/>	Coulbourn	<input type="checkbox"/>	Townsend	5	Yeocomico	<input type="checkbox"/>
Selden Island	<input type="checkbox"/>	Watson	<input type="checkbox"/>	Minguannan	<input type="checkbox"/>	Monongahela	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accokeek	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mockley	5	Sullivan Cove	<input type="checkbox"/>	Susquehannock	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wolfe Neck	<input type="checkbox"/>	Clemson Island	<input type="checkbox"/>	Shenks Ferry	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Vinette	<input type="checkbox"/>	Page	<input type="checkbox"/>	Moyaone	<input type="checkbox"/>		
				Potomac Cr	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Historic Sherd Types

Earthenware	Ironstone	<input type="checkbox"/>	Staffordshire	<input type="checkbox"/>	Stoneware	
Astbury	Jackfield	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tin Glazed	<input type="checkbox"/>	English Brown	<input type="checkbox"/>
Borderware	Mn Mottled	<input type="checkbox"/>	Whiteware	<input type="checkbox"/>	Eng Dry-bodie	<input type="checkbox"/>
Buckley	North Devon	<input type="checkbox"/>	Porcelain	<input type="checkbox"/>	Nottingham	<input type="checkbox"/>
Creamware	Pearlware	<input type="checkbox"/>			Rhenish	<input type="checkbox"/>
					Wt Salt-glazed	<input type="checkbox"/>

All quantities exact or estimated minimal counts

Other Artifact & Feature Types:

Prehistoric Artifacts	
Flaked stone	51
Ground stone	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stone bowls	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fire-cracked rock	30
Other lithics (all)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ceramics (all)	5
Rimsherds	3
Other fired clay	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human remain(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Modified faunal	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unmod faunal	<input type="checkbox"/>
Oyster shell	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Floral material	<input type="checkbox"/>
Uncommon Obj.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

Prehistoric Features

Mound(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Storage/trash pit	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Midden	<input type="checkbox"/>	Burial(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shell midden	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ossuary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Postholes/molds	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/>
House pattern(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
Palisade(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Hearth(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Lithic reduc area	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Lithic Material

Jasper	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fer quartzite	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sil sandstone	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chert	<input type="checkbox"/>	Chalcedony	<input type="checkbox"/>	European flint	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rhyolite	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ironstone	<input type="checkbox"/>	Basalt	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quartz	<input type="checkbox"/>	Argilite	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unknown	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Quartzite	<input type="checkbox"/>	Steatite	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Sandstone	<input type="checkbox"/>		

☒ Dated features present at site

Feat. 5 – Popes Creek sherd cluster (1 vessel) just above subsoil in shell midden, w/ charred organic material adhering to interior sherd surfaces

Historic Artifacts	
Pottery (all)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Glass (all)	1
Architectural	<input type="checkbox"/>
Furniture	65
Arms	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clothing	5
Personal items	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tobacco related	1
Activity item(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human remain(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Faunal material	<input type="checkbox"/>
Misc. kitchen	<input type="checkbox"/>
Floral material	<input type="checkbox"/>
Misc.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

Historic Features

Privy/outhouse	<input type="checkbox"/>	Depression/mound	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/>
Const feature	<input type="checkbox"/>	Burial(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
Foundation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Well/cistern	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Cellar hole/cellar	<input type="checkbox"/>	Trash pit/dump	<input type="checkbox"/>	Railroad bed	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hearth/chimney	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sheet midden	<input type="checkbox"/>	Earthworks	<input type="checkbox"/>
Postholes/molds	<input type="checkbox"/>	Planting feature	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mill raceway	<input type="checkbox"/>
Paling ditch/fence	<input type="checkbox"/>	Road/walkway	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wheel pit	<input type="checkbox"/>

All quantities exact or estimated minimal counts

Radiocarbon Data:

Sample 1: 2235 +/- 100 years BP Reliability High Sample 2: +/- years BP Reliability Sample 3: +/- years BP Reliability

AA-3867: charred organic material adhering to 2 sherds from Feat. 5, all sherds (at least 25) identified as part of single Popes Creek vessel

Sample 4: +/- years BP Reliability Sample 5: +/- years BP Reliability Sample 6: +/- years BP Reliability

Sample 7: +/- years BP Reliability Sample 8: +/- years BP Reliability Sample 9: +/- years BP Reliability

☐ Additional radiocarbon results available



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External Samples/Data:

Collection curated at MAC

☐ Additional raw data may be available online

Summary Description:

The Chapel Point Site, 18CH79, is a multi-component prehistoric and historic-era site in southern Charles County, Maryland. Based on available material to date, the site appears to have been occupied at various times during the Early and Late Archaic, all stages of the Woodland period, and from the 17th-20th centuries. Archaic deposits appear to be incidental, with the primary prehistoric deposits being associated with a Woodland shell midden. Historic components include a 17th through 19th century Catholic churchyard and cemetery, as well as use as an amusement park & fair grounds during the 20th century. The burials within the cemetery were exhumed in 1867 and re-located to a new cemetery at nearby St. Ignatius Church, however, as will be seen below, not all burials were accounted for in 1867. The site occupies a bluff on a point of land that juts out into the water near the confluence of the Port Tobacco and Potomac Rivers. The vegetation at the site is a mix of hardwood species with Sassafras Sandy Loam being the predominant soil type.

The site has been known to local collectors since at least the late 19th century, when a collection including items from the site was sent to the Smithsonian Institution. The shell middens were also included on a map of Port Tobacco River sites put together by Judge William J. Graham (an avocational archeologist) in 1935. However, no formal excavations of the site were documented prior to the late 20th century. In the late 1970s, salvage work was evidently conducted by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, but according to MHT staff this appears to have been limited to the collection of eroded out historic burial remains on the small beach below the site.

The first documented archeological work at the site was conducted in 1987. Again, at that time burials were observed eroding out of the bluff overlooking the river. Over the course of two weeks, archeologists with the Maryland Historical Trust, Maryland Geological Survey, and volunteers from the Archeological Society of Maryland worked to salvage human remains. Excavations recovered two historic burials partially intact, and three burial shafts from which the human remains had already been exhumed in 1867. All five burial shafts were excavated through an intact Woodland oyster shell midden. Artifacts associated with the recovered burials indicate a date of interment ca. 1820-1830. Details of the excavation methods employed are not provided in the full site report, however descriptions of three of the burial features (Features 1, 2, and 5) are provided as well as preliminary osteological analyses. Features 3 and 4 were salvaged independently by a member of the Maryland Geological Survey and details relating to their excavation are not available.

Collapse of the bank at Chapel Point had displaced almost half of the human remains from Feature 1. The skull bore extensive evidence for recent, post-mortem fracturing. There was also evidence of extensive tooth wear and infection. The intact left half of the burial was fully extended in an approximate east-west orientation with the hands lain over the chest. Three undecorated brass buttons, with fabric attached, were recovered from beneath the left innominate in situ, while two other were located in soil packed into the dorsal face of the right innominate. These buttons, while used in the mid to late 18th century, became more common into the early 19th century. Coffin wood remains were intact above and below the human remains. Nineteen coffin nails (cut, with square heads) were also recovered. The innominate itself suggests that the individual was male. Preliminary osteological analysis also suggests that the individual was over age 50 at the time of death (there is evidence of osteoarthritis), Caucasian, and approximately 5'3" in height.

The remains of a second individual (Feature 2) intruded on Feature 1 and was also a fully extended burial in the same east-west orientation. A rodent disturbance had displaced several of the bones from the upper half of the body. The lower half of the burial was undisturbed. Coffin wood and nails in evidence above, below, and on all sides also dates this burial to ca. 1820-1830. The skull of the individual from this burial was in very poor condition, fragmented by the decay and collapse of the wooden coffin. However, the remains of the mandible in combination with post-crania were sufficient to determine that the individual was a sub-adult, approximately 5-6 years old at the time of death. Artifacts associated with this burial included a white clay pipe fragment (6/64" diameter), an incised piece of aboriginal pottery with shell temper, a piece of brown bottle glass, 3 quartz flakes, and 21 cut nails. Aside from the nails, the remains are probably incidental inclusions in the burial fill.

The contents of Feature 5 had apparently been exhumed, as this shaft contained no intact human remains. During excavation of the fill, a mixture of prehistoric and historic artifacts and disarticulated skeletal material was recovered. The bottom of the coffin remained in situ with a portion disturbed during exhumation. Skeletal material recovered from the bottom of the shaft included several phalanges and an intact patella of probably multiple individuals. This mixing probably occurred during backfilling of the grave shaft in 1867. Only 19 cut nails, located in situ within intact portions of the coffin shaft date to the ca. 1820 period indicated by Features 1 and 2. Other artifacts from the shaft include wood fragments, 1 quartzite uniface, 1 quartz scraper, 11 quartz tertiary flakes, 3 quartzite tertiary flakes, 10 pieces of fire-cracked-rock, and 4 Popes Creek sherds.

Historical references indicate that the cemetery was abandoned at sometime around 1820, and artifacts recovered in 1987 date from ca. 1820-1830. Therefore, it seems probable that the dates of interment for Features 1 and 5 occurred ca. 1820. Allowing for some overlap or continuing usage, two grave shafts which intruded Feature 1 must have quickly followed that date of interment. In addition, the empty grave (Feature 5) supports the historical references stating that all known graves were removed to the new graveyard in 1867.

Additional excavations were conducted in 1988 and 1989 as part of an Archeological Society of Maryland Annual Field Session. This excavation work, unlike the excavations in 1987, focused primarily on the prehistoric shell midden deposits at 18CH79. Unfortunately, no site report has ever been written which describes these excavations in full. A brief description of the excavations is provided in a report relating to radiocarbon dating of a Pope's Creek vessel recovered from the site, and there is some additional information available in MHT site files. These reports state that the excavations were focused primarily on areas subject to ongoing erosion, though some other portions of the site were also examined. Excavations revealed a discontinuous prehistoric shell midden ranging from a few cm to 35 cm in thickness. An Early Woodland (Popes Creek) occupation looks like the primary source of the shell midden, though a few Middle and Late Woodland artifacts (small quantities of Mockley and Townsend sherds as well as some triangular points) were also found within the deposit. A few Early and Late Archaic items were found (2 LeCroy points and at least 1 broadspear according to MHT staff), but are probably not related to the shell midden as oysters are not thought to have been available prior to about 3,000 BC. More likely the Early and Late Archaic deposits are just evidence of short-term camps.

The Popes Creek occupation is the most well-documented. A particularly interesting find is the recovery of a cluster of at least 25 large Popes Creek sherds (including 3 rims) with additional sherds (likely from the same vessel) in the midden and on the talus slope immediately surrounding the cluster. The cluster of sherds was designated Feature 5 and was exposed in the bluff face, just above the subsoil. The upper layers of sherds were situated with the exterior vessel face up, while the lower sherds had the interior up. This suggests that a single vessel collapsed in on itself over time. Several of the sherds had charred organic material adhering to them, and as soon as this was discovered in the field, sherds were wrapped in foil for curation with the hope of eventually dating



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this organic substance.

The Popes Creek occupation looks like a major periodically revisited special purpose camp for oyster processing. Several stone clusters where stones are cracked in place look like dumps from stone boiling episodes. Significant amounts of fire-cracked-rock are mixed in with the oyster shells. Steaming of oysters is suggested since shells were not burned and were not broken by shucking. During the second year of excavation, a large hearth or platform of rocks (over 1 X 1 m in size) was encountered, but its function remains uncertain. A small sample of analyzed oyster shells suggests an average time of harvest for oyster in October, with a range from August to December. Gradually oyster shells were dumped in individual heaps around the site, some of these covering the evidence for other activities.

In 1989, two sherds from Feature 5 were submitted for tandem AMS radiocarbon dating. These yielded an uncalibrated date of 2,235±100 radiocarbon years before present. When calibrated, this yields a 2 sigma calendrical date of approximately 540 BC to AD 37. This places the midden deposits and Popes Creek ware squarely in the Early Woodland timeframe. This date is comparable to other C-14 samples associated with Popes Creek ware.

Site 18CH79 appears to have good integrity, containing both intact features and diagnostic artifacts. Provided provisions can be made for the avoidance of historic human remains which may be extant at the site, significant research questions could be answered through additional work at the site. In particular, future research should focus on the Early Woodland deposits and their relationship with later use of the midden, especially any notable differences in the timing of use of the site as evidenced through faunal analysis.

External Reference Codes (Library ID Numbers):

00005756, MDARC29-1, Site Files